

Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, MSW
Director, Public Policy, Advocacy & Strategic Engagement
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Inc.
In support of Raised *House Bill 5386 An Act Concerning Various Pay Equity and*
Fairness Matters

Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter and honorable members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Gretchen Raffa, Director of Public Policy, Advocacy & Strategic Engagement at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of raised *House Bill 5386 An Act Concerning Various Pay Equity and Fairness Matters*. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England serves over 60,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services in 17 health centers across the state. As a health care provider and advocate, Planned Parenthood's top priority is ensuring that all individuals have access to the health care and information they need, including the full range of reproductive health services.

As advocates for reproductive freedom we must consider all aspects of a woman's life including those that affect her economic stability. Women and mothers are important economic contributors to their families' economic security and their state's economy. We know firsthand, through patients we see in our health centers, the juggling act people have to play each month to pay their bills and meet their basic needs. The majority of our patients (87%) are women and we know that the gender wage gap is one of the contributing factors to their economic instability.

Women in Connecticut, especially women of color, earn significantly less than their male coworkers. In our state women are paid \$0.79 to every dollar paid to men, African American women are paid 58 cents, Latinas are paid 47 cents and Asian women are paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. Without action, the wage gap in Connecticut is not projected to close until 2058. Women's lower earnings are due to a number of factors, including lower earnings in occupations done mainly by women; lack of paid family leave and subsidized child care; and discrimination in compensation, recruitment, and hiring.ⁱ Women are more likely to be in female dominated professions that pay low wages simply because women are the majority of workers in that occupation.

Equal pay would cut poverty among working women and their families by more than half and add \$513 billion to the national economy. Providing equal pay to women would have a dramatic impact on their families. The poverty rate for all working women would be cut in half, falling from 8.0 percent to 3.8 percent. The very high poverty rate for working single mothers would fall by nearly half, from 28.9 percent to 14.5 percent.ⁱⁱ Raising the minimum wage would also help close the wage gap and will improve the economic wellbeing of women and families in our state.

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England has long fought for a woman's right to control her reproductive destiny which includes planning her family and raising her family in safe, healthy and sustainable environments. Our state must continue to move forward and update laws and policies to ensure a more equitable and just society. We urge you to support *House Bill 5386 An Act Concerning Various Pay Equity and Fairness Matters* to protect the basic rights of Connecticut working women by taking this important step to combat the gender wage gap in our state. This bill is one way of guaranteeing and promoting the health and economic security of women and giving families the opportunity to thrive instead of barely surviving. Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ The Gender Wage Gap: 2017 Earnings Differences by Race and Ethnicity, Institute for Women's Policy Research
<https://iwpr.org/publications/gender-wage-gap-2017-race-ethnicity/>

ⁱⁱ The Impact of Equal Pay on Poverty and the Economy, Institute for Women's Policy Research
<https://iwpr.org/publications/impact-equal-pay-poverty-economy/>